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ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
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FM AMEMBASSY TBILISI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2640  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 4973  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 TBILISI 002291

NOFORN  
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/21/2019  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: GEORGIA: DASD WALLANDER LEADS BILATERAL DEFENSE  
CONSULTATIONS

REF: TBILISI 002103

Classified By: Ambassador John R. Bass for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)v

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment. On 19-20 November, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Celeste A. Wallander co-chaired with First Deputy Minister of Defense Nikoloz Vashakidze the 2009 U.S.-Georgia Bilateral Defense Consultations (BDC) in Tbilisi, Georgia. The BDC established the strategic direction in U.S.-Georgia defense/military relations for 2010. The two sides reviewed Georgia's defense reform progress since the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, charted progress in U.S.-Georgia defense cooperation and examined Georgia's NATO integration efforts through the ANP/PARP process. U.S. briefings included a review of U.S. defense cooperation activities conducted in FY09 and up-coming FY10 activities, as well as an overview of the Georgia Deployment Program-ISAF (GDP-ISAF). Results included up-dating the strategic end-state for the Georgian Armed Forces, reviewing and prioritizing Ministry of Defense/Georgian Armed Forces (GAF) assistance requests, reaffirming Georgia's commitment to the "brains before brawn" approach, and prioritizing defense and security cooperation activities for 2010. Although there are visible signs of Georgian frustration their inability to procure lethal weaponry from the West and U.S., the Georgians clearly understand the need to deepen defense reforms. End Summary.

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW

¶2. (C) First Deputy Defense Minister Vashakidze opened the BDC, highlighting the link between the U.S.-Georgia Charter Commission Security Working Group and Bilateral Defense Consultations. The latter provided an opportunity to establish the strategic direction of bilateral defense cooperation and implement the tenets of the Charter. Vashakidze expressed satisfaction with the strong level of defense cooperation since the 2008 BDC in Washington. Georgia's new security reality and analysis of lessons learned from the August war, however, dictates Georgia's need to develop a homeland defense capability in parallel with its NATO reforms and coalition contributions. Vashakidze underscored Georgia's goal to boost reforms in 2010, referencing Georgia's commitment to the "brains before brawn" approach. He stressed that Georgia will require targeted U.S. assistance to achieve its goals of defense modernization and reforms along Euro-Atlantic lines.

¶3. (C) DASD Wallander opened by reaffirming the U.S. commitment to Georgia's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. The U.S. will continue to support robust areas of defense cooperation that will help Georgia modernize and reform its military along Euro-Atlantic lines. She noted recognition that the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces are undergoing significant changes in a difficult security environment. The U.S. will continue to refine and harmonize

its assistance efforts based on Georgia's needs, resource availability and regional security concerns. Georgia has been the most progressive reformer in the region, and as a result, expectations were high for Georgia to accelerate and deepen those reform efforts. DASD Wallander noted that although Georgia has shown commendable restraint in the current stand-off with Russia, this restraint must continue for as long as it takes to restore Georgia's territorial integrity by peaceful means. The U.S. has made clear to Russia that the "reset" will not come at the expense of Georgia. DASD Wallander reinforced the U.S. policy of supporting Georgia's NATO membership aspirations, noting there are multiple paths to NATO membership. Georgia needed to take responsibility and complete necessary reforms to meet NATO's performance-based standards.

#### U.S. Assistance

¶4. (C) DASD Wallander expounded on U.S. assistance efforts since the 2008 BDC. The United States had reoriented its assistance focus and placed significant resources into supporting a "brains before brawn" approach which will lay the groundwork for Georgia's defense needs, reform process and NATO aspirations. The Armed Forces Assessment Team report is serving as a positive blueprint for Georgia's defense reform and modernization needs. Much had been accomplished over the past year, with the U.S. supporting multiple mobile training teams, dozens of military to military events, over a dozen DoD senior level visits, several ship visits, dozens of conferences supporting Georgia's reform process and three major exercises (Cooperative Longbow, Cooperative Lancer, Exercise Immediate

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Response). Along with the multi-million dollar Georgia Deployment Program-ISAF program, the U.S. was apportioning a significant amount of resources, manpower and time to supporting Georgia's defense reform efforts, modernization and coalition contributions. The establishment of the first ever Colonels Working Group and Charter Security Working Group provided additional opportunities to review and evaluate bilateral defense and security cooperation in 2010. All these pointed to a strong foundation of cooperation for 2010-2011.

¶5. (C) Reflecting Assistant Secretary of Defense Vershbow's message in Tbilisi a month prior, DASD Wallander reaffirmed the U.S. was prepared for a long term commitment and extensive process of engagement with Georgia on defense reform and modernization. Georgia must understand, however, that U.S. defense and security assistance is tied to Georgia's political and security sector reform progress, as well as regional security. If Georgia makes real progress and meets established benchmarks, bilateral defense cooperation could deepen; on the other hand, lagging reforms will hamper deepened cooperation.

#### Georgian Progress and Assistance Needs

¶6. (C) Deputy Minister of Defense Kharshiladze and Deputy Chief of Defense Nairashvili recognized the strength of U.S. engagement, which had resulted in concrete progress and institutional change in the MoD that will bring lasting success to the GAF. The successful completion of Georgia's ANP, which NATO had highlighted, was a significant step forward. Kharshiladze reviewed Georgia's reform successes, noting the focus was on updating strategic and doctrinal products. The Georgian NSC is finalizing the Strategic Defense Review process, which should be completed in 2010. DCHOD Nairashvili reviewed Georgia's extensive assistance needs, which broke down into the following pools: professional military education, lessons learned, defense planning and capabilities development, doctrine development, training areas and simulations, command, control and communications development and intelligence.

¶7. (C) The Georgian side agreed to provide a prioritized list of assistance requests after the BDC. Minister Vashakidze requested increased U.S. support for the National Defense Academy (NDA) and training centers, noting Georgia is dedicating \$1.5 million in national funds to develop the Joint Command and General Staff College by fall 2010. Georgian funds will be used for additional support from the U.S. Defense Advisory Team in developing the NDA program. Several times during the BDC, various Georgian interlocutors noted that the current U.S. focus on guidance, was not meeting dire assistance needs. Georgia required more on-the-ground long-term assistance. In order to better address lessons learned from 2008, Minister Kharshiladze requested specific U.S. assistance on creating a lessons learned system for the GAF. Minister Vashakidze also reaffirmed the oft-repeated request for additional support on updating Georgia's General Defense Plan.

¶8. (C) Land Forces Commander Janjgava referred to Georgia's inability to procure defensive capabilities since the August 2008 conflict. Expounding on a common refrain heard at the BDC, Janjgava stressed that the embargo imposed by Russia and the "silent embargo" imposed by NATO countries and Georgia's western partners had severely degraded Georgia's self-defense capabilities. There was concern that Georgia could not maintain capabilities that it had developed prior to the August conflict. Although Georgia's leadership understood the U.S. was not prepared to provide capabilities, the signals being sent to Russia that Georgia was effectively being disarmed, were dangerous. Georgia also would have a difficult time preparing budget and force restructuring decisions without an understanding of what capabilities could be provided.

Afghanistan

¶9. (C) DASD Wallander expressed U.S. and NATO appreciation for Georgia's significant ISAF contributions. Georgia's 31st battalion was doing an excellent job in training and the Marines were praising Georgia's performance. DASD Wallander noted the U.S. has a detailed six month training program for Georgia's 31st battalion and plans to train and equip three successive Georgian battalions for follow-on deployments in a two year period. The U.S. will stay deeply engaged in supporting these efforts. DASD Wallander stressed that ISAF efforts in Afghanistan are a vital contribution to supporting

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international security and the U.S. appreciated Georgia's strong efforts to support this mission. As the President would soon decide on how to move forward in Afghanistan, the U.S. appreciated that Georgia was ready to increase its support alongside the U.S., Allies and partner nations. The U.S. also appreciated the assistance of the Government of Georgia on transit of goods for Afghanistan. Cargo volumes on the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) were steadily increasing, as all involved gain experience with the process and the routes. The U.S. expected that Georgia is about to see a significant increase in NDN container traffic.

¶10. (C) Colonel Cottrell, Commander of U.S. Marines Training and Advisory Group, provided a brief on the progress of Georgia's Afghanistan deployment. He stressed that the Georgian contribution was vital to the effort in Afghanistan, noting that when Georgia is deployed and operating in full-spectrum operations in Afghanistan, they will represent approximately 20 percent of the combat power in Helmand province. In two months, U.S. Marines had seen significant progress in the 31st battalion, all at surprising rate. Colonel Cottrell noted that when compared to other partners he had trained around the world, Georgia's soldiers had positive attitudes and were proving to be the best partner he had worked with thus far. Georgia would need to be prepared for the U.S. sponsored Mission Rehearsal Exercise in Germany,

January-February 2010, which will replicate conditions in Afghanistan and help validate Georgia's forces for their upcoming mission.

## Results

11. (C) The following outlines the BDC results:

--DoD expressed support for Georgia's NATO aspirations and will continue to use the NATO-Georgia Commission to facilitate Allies' support and assistance.

--DoD welcomes Georgia's significant ISAF contributions and will continue to support the training and equipping of Georgia's battalions for ISAF.

--DoD and Georgia will endeavor in 2010 to conduct follow on working group-level consultations - in addition to Bilateral Defense Consultations - at the Charter Commission Security Working Group, Colonels Working Group and Bilateral Country Planning Conference.

--Both sides acknowledged that deepening defense cooperation rests on Georgia's ability to continue its reform process and meet critical milestones that support defense reform, modernization and professionalization along Euro-Atlantic lines.

--U.S. and Georgia will continue to work together to implement defense and security cooperation activities that meet the established agreed upon end state for the Georgian Armed Forces: GAF that are trained, equipped and structured for territorial defense, while supporting Georgia's defense transformation priorities, NATO aspirations, and coalition contributions.

--Both sides will explore options for expanding Georgia's training capacity.

--U.S. and Georgia will focus on professional military education and training as top priorities for the GAF, two of which are reforming and modernizing the National Defense Academy and providing the GAF/MoD educational opportunities.

--Georgia will continue to develop a defense reform process implementation plan and lessons learned program, with DoD assistance.

--DoD will assist Georgia in developing necessary strategic and doctrinal products that facilitate transformation and modernization of the GAF along Euro-Atlantic lines.

--DoD will continue to closely review Georgia's list of immediate needs and longer range transformation goals.

--Based upon Georgian force structure decisions resulting from the SDR process, DoD will assist Georgia in identifying its capability gaps.

--EUCOM informed the Georgian delegation of the concept approved by CDR USEUCOM to move Exercise IMMEDIATE RESPONSE to the Balkans and solicited Georgia's views on hosting Exercise SHARED HORIZON (SH) 11, a multi-year, interagency,

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consequence management exercise with a building block approach.

--U.S. and Georgia updated the previously agreed upon strategic end-state for the Georgian Armed Forces, to include coalition contribution efforts: Georgian Armed Forces that are trained, equipped, and structured for territorial defense, while supporting Georgia's defense transformation priorities, NATO aspirations, and coalition contribution efforts.

--Georgia will identify the battalion for follow-on rotation by December 2009.

--Recognized that assistance in defense planning and ISAF contributions are enduring priorities, and identified additional specific areas of assistance requests to include professional military education, lessons learned, doctrine development, training areas and simulations training capability development, command, control & communications, and intelligence.

--Georgian delegation pledged to more effectively prioritize their requests for assistance. Both sides agreed to work together to identify priority activities for FY10 and intermediate objectives for FY11 in preparation for the U.S.-Georgia Colonel's Working Group in February 2011.

--EUCOM and USAREUR exercise planners will follow up with additional consultations with Embassy Tbilisi on the proposed concept for Exercise SHARED HORIZON.

#### COMMENT

¶12. (C) The 2009 Bilateral Defense Consultations concluded successfully, setting the strategic direction of defense relations for the following year. While the Georgians continue to request military hardware for territorial defense (mainly anti-tank, air defense and command and control systems), they have embraced the U.S. sponsored "brains over brawn" approach to their defense transformation, and appreciate the U.S. efforts supporting reforms and modernization of the GAF. Although there are visible signs of Georgian frustration over a perceived "silent arms embargo," they clearly understand at the highest levels of government the need to show progress on defense and political reforms. Despite lingering concerns about Russia's presence in the occupied territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and fears of another invasion, Georgia is looking to the future as MoD leadership remains positive about U.S. engagement, while staying focused on the task of facilitating U.S. efforts to train and equip their forces as they prepare for their first deployment to Afghanistan as a fighting unit with no caveats.

¶13. (U) This message was cleared by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Wallander.  
BASS